

REMARKS

Claims 1, 3-5, 7, 8, 10, and 11 remain in this application. Claims 2, 6, 9, and 12-17 are canceled. Reconsideration of the application is requested.

The comments set forth by the Examiner in section 1 on page 2 of the Office Action are noted. It is also to be noted, however, that each of the documents cited in the European Search Report mentioned has been made of record by the Examiner.

The informality referred to in section 2 on page 2 of the Office Action is eliminated by the amendments made above.

Independent claims 1 and 5 are rejected, along with dependent claims 2 and 6, as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 5,865,474 to Takahashi. Claims 1 and 5 are also rejected, along with claims 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, and 12-17, as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 4,893,845 to Bartholomew. Reconsideration is requested.

Claims 2, 6, 9, and 12-17 are now canceled as noted above, claim 1 now incorporates limitations previously appearing in claim 2, and claim 5 now incorporates limitations previously appearing in claim 6.

The Takahashi patent shows a connector device for pipes in which the pipes are fixed on a plate portion 6. Connectors 4, which can be placed on the pipes 8, are all incorporated in the first plate portion 2, whereby the pipes 8 and the connectors 4 are each arranged such that they are correspondingly positioned opposite each other. Thus several connectors 4 can simultaneously be placed in a simple manner on a corresponding number of pipes 8.

According to the present invention, by contrast, two-piece coupling devices are used, and each coupling device piece is connected with a part of a corresponding pipe.

Claims 1 and 5, in any event, are amended to reflect that the plugs are made of an elastic material and are combined into groups. In the Takahashi connector device, by contrast, the pipes 8 are inseparably secured at the pipe holder 5 by soldering, for example.

In the Bartholomew patent, the support plate 20 is mounted on the firewall 12 and is already provided with elbows 18. Thus, the Bartholomew support plate 20 corresponds to the plugs 9 of the present invention, and conduits 97 or 98 can be inserted from the opposite side of the firewall 12. These conduits, however, are not combined into groups as currently amended claim 1 and 5 require.

It is respectfully submitted that neither currently amended claim 1 nor currently amended claim 5 is anticipated by the Takahashi patent or by the Bartholomew patent for reasons discussed above. It is further submitted that dependent claims 3 and 7 are also not anticipated by the patents mentioned, and that claims 1, 3, 5, and 7 are patentable along with claims 4, 8, 10, and 11. All claims remaining in this application, therefore, are now patentable.

This application is now in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any questions after considering this Reply, the Examiner is invited to telephone the undersigned attorney.

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Respectfully submitted,



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